



TOP AAA TOURISM WORKSHOP OF THE ALPS-ADRIATIC- ALLIANCE

PODČETRTEK, 22ND AND 23RD OF SEPTEMBER 2014

SUMMARY WORKSHOP RESULTS

**PREPARED FOR: ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPALITIES AND
TOWNS OF SLOVENIA (ORDER NO. 46/14)**

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INTRODUCTION

On September 22 and 23 2014, a workshop was held by the Thematic Coordination Point for Tourism of the Alps-Adriatic-Alliance, the Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia. The purpose of the workshop was to develop a general approach to cooperation in the tourism sector in the area of Alps-Adriatic. Fifteen participants from Slovenia, Carinthia (AT), Koprivnica-Križevci County (HR), and Vas County (HU) took part in the workshop.

The agenda of the workshop was as follows:

Monday, 22nd of September at 14.00

- getting to know each other
- short presentation about tourism product (Maja Uran Maravić)
- short presentation on generating project ideas (Jernej Stritih)
- moderated working process with result - identified 3 joint project ideas (Matjaž Harmel)

Tuesday, 23rd of September at 9.00

- working process on the identified projects (Jernej Stritih)
- closing workshop with lunch.

Jernej Stritih facilitated the process of generating project ideas in cooperation with Matjaž Harmel and Klemen Strmšnik from Zavita d.o.o. The process included the following steps:

- SWOT Analysis of the tourism sector in Alps-Adriatic,
- Common vision of Alps-Adriatic as a tourist destination,
- Identification of initial priority projects,
- Formulation of project objectives and expected results.

Following are the results of the process.

RESULTS OF SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT Analysis was developed according to the method presented in Annex 1. Keywords were collected from all the participants and grouped into coherent statements by the facilitator. The result is presented in the SWOT table below, while the transcript of the keywords presented in the Annex 2.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Diverse landscape with high biodiversity and rich cultural heritage ▪ Strategic geographic location, safe to travel ▪ High variety of offer in short distance (Sea, Alps, Pannonian plain, Cultural heritage, Gastronomy, Wine, Many different cultural and natural attractions) ▪ Collaboration between more countries in haring best practices and know-how ▪ Tourism and leisure fair Alpe Adria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No common identity and incoherent tourism offer ▪ Poor tourism infrastructure, especially public transport links across borders ▪ Insufficient cross border cooperation ▪ Alps Adriatic area is not a known tourist destination outside Europe ▪ Lack of strategic planning, joint promotion and product development
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Peaceful region ▪ New cooperation developing new tourism product based on authenticity ▪ Diversity of options including beauty of nature, vicinity of the sea, food and wine, active (back to nature) holidays, festivals and spiritual tourism ▪ Common promotion on external markets ▪ Transfer of experience and good practices between members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uncoordinated action ▪ Lack of interest for joint projects/products ▪ Competition between partners ▪ Expensive region compared to others globally, economic crisis ▪ Tourist behaviour changes ▪ Climate change ▪ Administrative barriers (e.g. Institutions for cultural heritage)

VISION

After the grouped results of the SWOT analysis were presented to the audience, they were asked to contribute keywords for the common vision of the Alps-Adria tourism destination (transcript presented in Annex 3). The resulting vision statement is presented as follows:

Alps - Adriatic is a globally recognized region, with high quality of diverse and sustainable tourism offer based on its natural and cultural wealth.

The region is well coordinated and interconnected, and tourism offers high quality of life to its inhabitants and visitors.

PROJECTS

Based on the SWOT analysis and vision, as well as presentations of their own initiatives by the participants, the following list of possible priority projects was developed:

- Developing the brand through best practices
- Public transport across borders
- Networking of youth hostels
- Networking of horse riding
- Network of villages
- Cycling networks across borders
- Exchange of cultural events
- Wine

During the second day, general objectives and specific objectives, and results were discussed for some of the projects, as described below:

DEVELOPING THE BRAND THROUGH BEST PRACTICES

GOAL

Alpe Adria is a globally recognized region, with high quality of diverse and sustainable tourism offer

OBJECTIVES

- Increase awareness of the area
- Developing quality standards of tourism in the area
- Learning by exchange of experiences

RESULTS

- More visitors from other regions/continents
- Developed sustainable service providers
- Diversity of offer recognized in the region

The idea of the project is to build the Alps-Adriatic »bottom up«, by identifying and promoting the highest quality tourism products and services in the region. Possible starting point could be the European Destinations of Excellence within the area and a possible mechanism for their promotion could be the Alpe Adria Fair in Ljubljana.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACROSS BORDERS

GOAL

The region is well coordinated and interconnected, and tourism offers high quality of life to its inhabitants and visitors.

OBJECTIVES

- To establish public transport between the regions in the area
- To promote use of public transport

RESULTS

- Possibility to travel in the region with public transport
- Increased number of passengers with public transport
- User friendly public transport
- Linked Sustainable mobility plans across the borders
- Smart Alpe Adria public transport ticket

It was proposed that a policy recommendation is sent to the decision makers in the AA member regions and relevant national authorities to point out the necessity of public transport connections across borders both for tourism and for the quality of life of inhabitants of the AA area. The action should be coordinated with TCP Mobility (Burgenland).

NETWORKING OF YOUTH HOSTELS

GOAL

High quality of diverse and sustainable tourism offer based on its natural and cultural wealth.
The region is well coordinated and interconnected

OBJECTIVES

- Set up joint tourism products
- To build long term relationship with young travellers/and among them
- To increase number of youth hostels in the area
- Exchange of experiences and best practices among partners

RESULTS

- To increase number of young travellers
- Increased diversity of tourist offer
- Raised awareness of AA region and use of PT
- Increased income and quality of services

The project idea builds on the good experience with the project Say HI to Carinthia and would include promotion of AA brand and two way communication with/among young travellers.

NETWORKING OF HORSE RIDING

GOAL

High quality of diverse and sustainable tourism offer based on its natural and cultural wealth. The region is well coordinated and interconnected

OBJECTIVES

- Joint tourism product around horse riding
- Higher number of service providers
- Promotion of horse tradition places
- Capacity building and exchange of good practices

RESULTS

- Increased number of tourists related to horses
- Revitalized cultural heritage related to horses
- Increased number of horse guides
- Joint promotion
- Established network of horse trails
- Branding

This is a project proposed and being developed by the Koprivnica Križevci County from Croatia. It should be coordinated with the project of long distance riding. Koprivnica Križevci County is preparing a project application in this regard to COSME.

NETWORK OF VILLAGES

GOAL

High quality of diverse and sustainable tourism offer based on its natural and cultural wealth. The region is well coordinated and interconnected, and tourism offers high quality of life to its inhabitants and visitors.

OBJECTIVES

- To stop depopulation from rural areas
- Job opportunities creation on the countryside through touristic products development
- Develop accessibility to the villages
- Protection of nature and culture heritage
- Better management of culture heritage

RESULTS

- More jobs in rural areas
- Network of villages
- Joint promotion of authentic villages (architecture and traditional events, practices)
- Cooperation among stakeholders
- Branding through joint criteria
- Promotion of local agricultural products
- Shared experiences with other similar networks (historical towns,..)

Association of Slovenian Municipalities and Towns (SOS) has already prepared a project application in this regard to START Danube Region.

CYCLING NETWORKS ACROSS BORDERS

There are many initiatives for regional, national and cross border cycling networks in the AA area. These projects and initiatives are important for the Alps Adriatic tourism destination, should be supported and coordinated across the area.

EXCHANGE OF CULTURAL EVENTS

There are numerous cultural events and festivals in the AA area. There is significant scope for cooperation and exchange between these events and festivals, that could benefit all those involved.

WINE

All AA members produce wine and have already developed wine roads to promote wine to tourists. Wine could become an important element of the common brand of Alps – Adriatic. The action should be coordinated with TCP Agriculture.

ANNEX 1

Analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis)

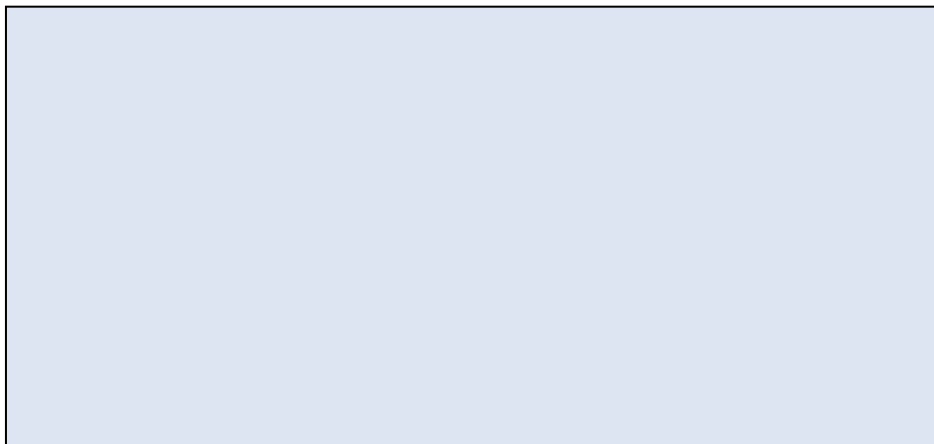
In order to develop the vision of the tourism in the Alpe Adria region, we should develop a common understanding of the present situation and the future context. You are kindly requested to fill in the post-it notes below and they will be collected and combined into a common table like the one below.

SWOT Table:

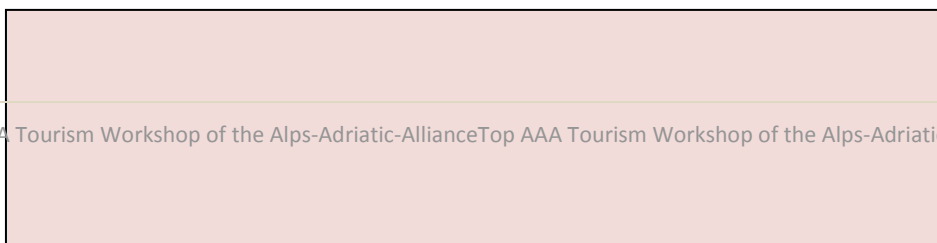
Strengths ...	Weaknesses ...
Opportunities ...	Threats ...

On the post-it notes attached to this paper, please write down, in maximum two words on each note, the following:

Strengths – What are the current strengths of Alpe Adria? What is done well? Be realistic! Please put down two strengths (one on each note) that you consider most important.



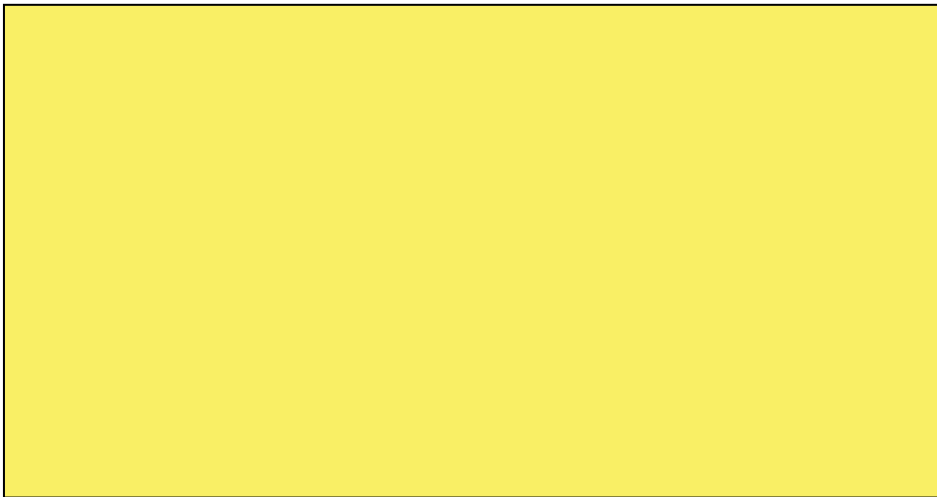
Weaknesses – What is wrong? What can be improved? What is done poorly? What practice should be avoided? Weaknesses are internal characteristics that we are not happy with and represent an obstacle to future development. They may include physical characteristics, lack of resources and capacity, conflicts etc. Please put down two weaknesses (one on each note) that you consider most important.



Opportunities - What are good opportunities for Alpe Adria tourism region? What trends can be taken advantage of? Opportunities emerge from external changes in technologies, markets, changes of government policy, demographic and social changes, new lifestyles, local events. Please put down two opportunities (one on each note) that you consider most important.



Threats – What external obstacles and risks you see in front of tourism in Alpe Adria region? What changes in the economy and the environment threaten the protected area? Please put down two threats (one on each note) that you consider most important.



Vision

Vision is a short statement representing common understanding where we want to go, i.e. how tourism in the Alpe Adria region should look like at a certain point in future, in our case in 10 years. A vision should be inspiring and realistic at the same time. We will try to combine the elements of the vision provided by you in a common statement.

Your elements for the vision –Please put down two most important characteristics of Alpe Adria region that you believe can and should be achieved in the next 10 years, by 2024 (with up to two words on each note).

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for participants to write their responses to the prompt above.

Thank you for your cooperation.

ANNEX 2

TRANSCRIPT OF SWOT

STRENGTHS

- Incredible landscape
- Cultural heritage
- Great biotic diversity
- Natural Attractions (Protected areas)
- Strategic position
- Geographic location
- Safe region to travel
- Short distance Alps – Adriatic
- Short distances – from Alps to Adriatic in a few steps
- Diversity within short distances (Geographical: Sea, Alps, Pannonian plain, Cultural, Gastronomical)
- Diverse offer on short distances
- Variety of offer in small distance
- Diverse cultural & natural resources & offer
- Lot of different possibilities
- Many different cultural and natural attractions
- Visibility
- Unique cross border cooperation
- Collaboration between more countries
- Sharing best practices and know-how
- Tourism and leisure fair

WEAKNESSES

- No common identity
- Incoherent tourism offer
- Bad tourist infrastructure
- Cross border transit possibilities by public transport

- Institutional cooperation
- Too many stakeholders
- Lack of collaboration
- Cooperation
- Weak cross border cooperation
- The deepness of cooperation
- The frequency of meetings and communication

- Borders and different legislations (administrative barriers)
- High fragmentation
- The level of tourist services is unequal

- The Alps Adriatic area is not popular enough as a tourist destination outside Europe, no joint advertising on the global market
- Not enough advertising
- Lack of strong joint promotion and product development
- Lack of strategic planning

OPPORTUNITIES

- Peaceful region

- Diversity = Opportunity
- Beauty of nature and vicinity of the sea
- Use of authenticity food tourism
- Raising demand for active (back to nature) holidays
- Cultural tourism
- Festival tourism exchange (ethno events)
- Spiritual tourism

- New cooperation
- New tourism product
- Joint, common presentation and marketing of a diversified product
- To raise awareness about the region
- Cooperation of experienced members can lead to unique and valuable ideas and make it easier to realise them
- Common promotion on internal markets
- Stimulation of cooperation

- Common promotion on external markets
- 3rd market
- Get tourists from other countries, even overseas market
- Appear together on the market with complex packages

- Income increase

THREATS

- No coordination
- Uncoordinated action
- Small different interests
- Incapability to work hand in hand
- Individualism of tourism product providers and/or destinations
- Lack of interest for joint projects/products
- The members see each other as competitors
- Distance between members
- Competition of neighbour countries
- The nature of competition in tourism
- Competition between partners
- Expensive region compared to others globally
- Tourist behaviour changes
- Not enough funds
- Another recession
- Economic crisis
- Airports
- Climate change
- Institutions for cultural heritage (dinosaurs)

ANNEX 3

ELEMENTS OF VISION

- Leading destination for active holidays in Europe
- Important position on the map of tourism destinations in Europe
- Coherent destination
- Strong recognisable brand
- Internationally recognisable
- Alps-Adria area is a brand in the global market
- Tourist service quality increase
- Go on the global market with complex cross-border products/packages
- Joint marketing and promotion strategy on overseas markets
- Reach the deepness of cooperation or build up of such as system of cooperation what can be a common brand and can be self - supplying
- One destination with diversified tourism product
- A number of joint, diverse, sustainable equally developed tourist products
- Natural heritage
- Cultural heritage
- Focus on youth tourism - most growing and most sustainable
- Alps Adria is known as one of the World's most sustainable tourism destinations
- Environmentally friendly tourism
- Increase possibility of public transport between at least regional centres on different sides of state borders

ANNEX 4

DRAFT POLICY RECOMMENDATION RELATED TO CROSS BORDER TRANSPORT

Dear Sirs,

The Alps – Adriatic Alliance has potential to further develop its tourism sector by becoming a globally recognised sustainable tourism destination. During the Top AAA Tourism Workshop of the Alps-Adriatic-Alliance in Podčetrtek Slovenia on September 22 and 23 2014, organised by the Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia, the following common vision for the cooperation in the field of tourism was formulated.

Alps - Adriatic is a globally recognized region, with high quality of diverse and sustainable tourism offer based on its natural and cultural wealth. The region is well coordinated and interconnected, and tourism offers high quality of life to its inhabitants and visitors.

Several priority steps were identified to start implementing this vision over the coming years. But during the analysis of the present situation, an important weakness of the AAA area was identified in relation to the cross border connection by public transport.

Although some initiatives exist, most regional centres are not or are poorly connected by bus, rail or other means of public transport. This is a recognise obstacle to general cooperation and integration in the area, but it also represents an important disadvantage for tourists who want to travel across the AAA area and the tourism service providers who want to offer cross border products. Lack of public transport connections is particularly difficult for guests from other continents (who mainly use public transport while in Europe) and for young travellers.

In order to achieve the vision of a globally recognised and competitive tourist destination at the global level, improving public transport across borders in the AAA area is probably the main precondition. It is also a key precondition for being able to claim that our tourism offer is sustainable. In order to achieve a good status of cross border public transport connections, we therefore urge the relevant regional and national authorities to:

- Plan, agree and implement the missing bus and rail connections across border between all the regional centres of the Alps Adria Alliance.
- To facilitate the establishment of innovative public transport solutions in different cross border regions of the AAA area.
- To make cross border public transport links a priority of the regional development and other development strategies at the regional and national level.
- To eliminate any remaining administrative obstacles to cross border public transport.

We believe that these actions will enable the development of cross border links and contribute to overall interconnectedness of the AAA area. They will also improve the national systems of public transport and mobility.